

EDITORIAL

Shake the foundations of the US-Marcos oppressive, puppet and fascist regime

In the coming months and years, it is the task of the national-democratic movement to earnestly carry out mass propaganda and organizing. Every effort should be made to reach millions upon millions of people in factories, communities, campuses, offices and others. They must advance their struggles primarily against price increases, for higher wages and salaries, jobs and livelihoods, and against US military intervention and its war preparations and provocations.

Take advantage of the favorable situation to further the task of arousing, organizing and mobilizing all democratic sectors of the Filipino people, especially the workers, peasants and the broad masses of the toiling people.

Gather the growing indignation

of the Filipino people against the oppressive, fascist and puppet US-Marcos regime that has brought them greater misery, poverty and suffering. In the past two years under Marcos, the economy and people's livelihood have plunged, state terrorism and repression of

democratic rights have intensified, corruption and greed have worsened, and the puppet regime's subservience to the political and military intervention of US imperialism has deepened.

The anti-people, anti-poor and pro-imperialist policies of Ferdinand Marcos Jr have led to the further deterioration of the economy and people's livelihood, which Duterte left in shambles. Since Marcos took over, the prices of rice and other basic goods and services have skyrocketed. In an effort to attract foreign investment, Marcos has prevented increases in the minimum wages of workers and the salaries of ordinary employees, which now cover only half their families' daily living expenses.

Marcos has failed to solve the serious problem of unemployment, especially among the youth. Worse, Marcos paved the way for big foreign capitalists and their big bourgeois allies to seize the land, fishing grounds, homes and livelihoods of the masses of toiling people, and even of the petty bourgeoisie in the countryside and urban areas. Millions upon millions of Filipinos have no jobs, no decent work or adequate income. Marcos has pushed for greater import liberalization, further killing local production, and crippling and bankrupting the economy. The Filipino's debt burden has increased as a result of Marcos' rapid borrowing. Marcos' claims of "growth" are empty and false, and merely ob-



sure the steady deterioration of the conditions of the broad masses of the people.

Marcos unleashed his fascist military and police agents in order to relentlessly attack the hungry and angry people. In hundreds of rural barangays, the military rules under the guise of "community service" and "village development". In the cities, factory and office unions, poor community groups, campus organizations, associations of women, church people, human rights defenders, environmentalists and so on, are subjected to surveillance. People are intimidated to "surrender" or "return to the folds of law" in an attempt to silence them, break their unity, and suppress their resistance.

Marcos uses the twin Anti-Terrorism Law and the Anti-Terrorism Financing Law, to carry out left and right arrests, filing of false charges, and detention. In the countryside, human rights abuses, killings and massacres of civilians, and other violations of international humanitarian law continue unabated. Terrorist aerial bombings, strafings and artillery shelling are carried out relentlessly, to strike fear into the hearts of the population.

Under Marcos, the rotten core of

the ruling system is further exposed. Since his return to Malacañang, Marcos has successively dismissed the cases against his family related to the hundreds of billions of pesos of wealth accumulated during the dictatorship. In a sign of the crisis of the ruling system, Marcos' greed for bureaucratic corruption and privilege is insatiable. He holds hundreds of billions of pesos in the Maharlika Investment Fund to benefit his cronies and favorite officials.

Marcos now controls the smuggling of rice, sugar, and other agricultural contraband. Marcos snatched away major government contracts from Duterte's hands, such as the Mindanao railway project, and other large infrastructure projects. This is one of the causes of the eventual breakup of their supposed "unity" and intensi-




fying conflicts between the rival factions of the ruling classes.

While Duterte bowed to China and was dominated the US, Marcos completely surrendered the Philippines' freedom and independence to US imperialism. In exchange for military aid, political support and promises of investment, Marcos built the US more military bases and facilities throughout the country to preposition foreign troops and weapons. Marcos has allowed the US to use the Philippines as a base for its military operations in line with its geopolitical strategy against its imperialist rival China. Not a day goes by that the US does not use the Philippine land and sea for war exercises and preparations. Under the guise of defending the West Philippine Sea, Marcos has allowed the US to use the AFP and Philippine Coast Guard to launch provocative operations against China and to justify the possible invocation of the Mutual Defense Treaty when the US wishes.

The future of the entire country is bleak and the situation of the Filipino people is certain to worsen under the US-Marcos regime and the rotten state of the ruling classes. The entire people must rise up and act together to defend their national and democratic interests. Marcos is now the number one burden on the shoulders of the masses of the people, the number one terrorist, the number one in corruption, the number one puppet of US imperialism and the number one traitor to the country's freedom and security. The US-Marcos regime is number one being exposed, condemned and opposed by the Filipino people.

Persevere in all areas of resistance. From factory strikes, to rallies in schools, offices, communities and streets, to challenging the reactionary elections, to armed struggle in the countryside, the broad masses must give form to their anger and their profound contempt of Marcos, and take action to denounce and shake the foundations of his reign.

AB




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Contents

Editorial: Shake the foundations of the US-Marcos puppet and fascist regime	1
Makabayan to field 12 senatorial bets	3
New group pushes for NDFP-GRP peace talks	3
Protests	3
Returning to Bagtuan	4
RAA will further jeopardize Filipinos	5
US psywar regarding the West Philippine Sea	6
Military and police kills brothers	7
ILPS assembly in Malaysia	7
In short	8
74th IB: Butcher of Sityo Canonghan	9
BRT scheme in Iloilo	10

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Makabayan Coalition to field 12 senatorial candidates

Calling itself the People's Opposition, the Makabayan Coalition announced on July 10 its plan to field 12 senatorial candidates in the 2025 election. The coalition is fully determined to stand as the genuine opposition force in an election dominated by factions of the ruling class. It seeks to represent the common people's interests in the Senate.

The coalition declared that its patriotic and progressive candidates will promote a comprehensive national-democratic program that will respond to the "Filipino people's aspirations for development for the majority, respect for rights, and genuine national sovereignty."

Rep. France Castro announced plans of running for the Senate on June 26 under the coalition, with the slogan "Titser naman sa Senado" (Time for a teacher in the Senate).

Just two weeks later, the state launched an immediate attack on her. She was unjustly convicted of child abuse, along with Satur Ocampo and 16 others dubbed the Talaingod 18. The case was based on their response to a request of teachers and 14 students to be rescued in Sitio Dulyan, Barangay Palma Gil, Talaingod Davao del Norte in 2018. In December 2018, the court dismissed the kidnapping case against them. National-democratic groups launched a series of actions to condemn the latter court's verdict. The Talaingod 18 vowed to fight the verdict on all fronts.

The Makabayan Coalition stood firm despite the attacks. On July 16, it announced Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Arlene Brosas as its second candidate. Brosas was chosen by the Committee of 100 Women representing various sectors. Castro and Brosas are currently House Minority Floor Leader and Assistant House Minority Floor Leader in Congress, respectively. AB

Newly formed group calls for peace talks between the GRP-NDFP

SEVERAL PROMINENT INDIVIDUALS and leaders gathered on July 16 at the Santo Domingo Church Compound, Quezon City to discuss and deliver a strong message to the Marcos regime regarding peace talks. On that day, they formed the Council of Leaders for Peace Initiatives (CLPI) to push for peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

CLPI is composed of academics, lawyers, former deans, bishops and various church leaders, and prominent peace advocates. The group called on Marcos Jr to express a "clear and unqualified commitment to pursuing a peaceful and negotiated solution to the long-running armed conflict" in the Philippines. It said a just peace is imperative for a better state of the nation.

The group emphasized the lack of subsequent steps and actions after the Oslo Joint Statement following its release by the GRP and NDFP on November 23, 2023. It is a declaration of intent or aspiration to reopen the talks and formulate a framework on how to carry it out.



3,000 sugarcane farmers rally in Batangas. Led by SUGAR-Batangas, 3,000 sugarcane farmers assembled before the DSWD office in Batangas City on July 10 to demand the distribution of aid meant for them. As a result of the rally, DSWD accepted the documents it previously rejected from the fifth batch of beneficiaries. The farmers called for the immediate release of aid.

Protest for Palestine. More than 300 youths and students from Baguio City joined the protest for Palestine on July 7 on Malcolm Square in the city. Meanwhile, Tamaraws for Palestine (T4P) staged a picket before the FEU on July 15 to express their support for the Palestinian people. They denounced the ongoing US-supported Zionist Israel state's genocidal campaign against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Protest against the RAA at the Japanese embassy. Bayan and Asia-Wide Campaign against US-Japanese Domination and Aggression of Asia trooped to the Japanese embassy in Pasay City on July 8 to condemn the signing of the Reciprocal Access Agreement between Japan and the Philippines. Bayan said the agreement is a dangerous step and will result in intensified militarization and conflict in the Asia-Pacific.

Anti-imperialist groups in the US gather and protest against NATO. On July 7, 60 anti-imperialist groups under the Resist NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) gathered in Washington DC in the US to call for an end to the US wars in Ukraine and other parts world, and its genocide in Palestine. They marched toward the White House. Earlier, the groups launched the Resist NATO Summit where 300 individuals attended. They timed this before the meeting of NATO countries in Washington on July 7-9 on the occasion of its 75th anniversary.

Returning to Bagtuan

In the spirit of the rectification movement being carried out by the Communist Party of the Philippines throughout the country, all revolutionary forces in the Southern Tagalog provinces are earnestly advancing various aspects of their work. Units of the New People's Army (NPA) are painstakingly recovering areas that were long abandoned in order to reconsolidate the mass base and strengthen these further amid intensified enemy attacks.

Bagtuan is one of these places. The village has a rich revolutionary history making it a prime target for the NTF-Elcac. The people in the area are victims of mass forced surrender, physical and mental torture, threats, harassment and intimidation. Over the past five years, fascist military and police forces have relentlessly carried out focused military operations (FMO) and Retooled Community Support Program Operations (RCSPO) with the goal of destroying the revolutionary unity of the masses.

A number of bogus and destructive development projects are set to be brought to Bagtuan, including mining operations in the mountains. It will destroy the swidden farms, paddy fields and settlements the people won through successful agrarian revolution waged by the masses in the area, along with the

NPA.

However, the Bagtuan masses are undaunted in the face butchers' attacks and devastation. They welcomed the return of the NPA unit to the area with great joy despite an RCSPO stationed in one of Bagtuan's communities.

The NPA unit immediately gathered the key people in the area for a meeting to reorganize their revolutionary activities. Through the efforts of the masses and the unit, they launched a series of studies of the Party Constitution, Program on the National Democratic Revolution, and CPP-CC statement on the 55th anniversary of the Party. Many former members of the local Party branch (SPL) renewed their Party vows by way of reaffirming their commitment.

"The enemy cannot subvert our commitment to the Party and the NPA no matter how many times they operate in the area to terrorize us," Tatay Ipe, secretary of the SPL, said.

Many new members also took their oath, demonstrating the unbroken chain of revolutionaries

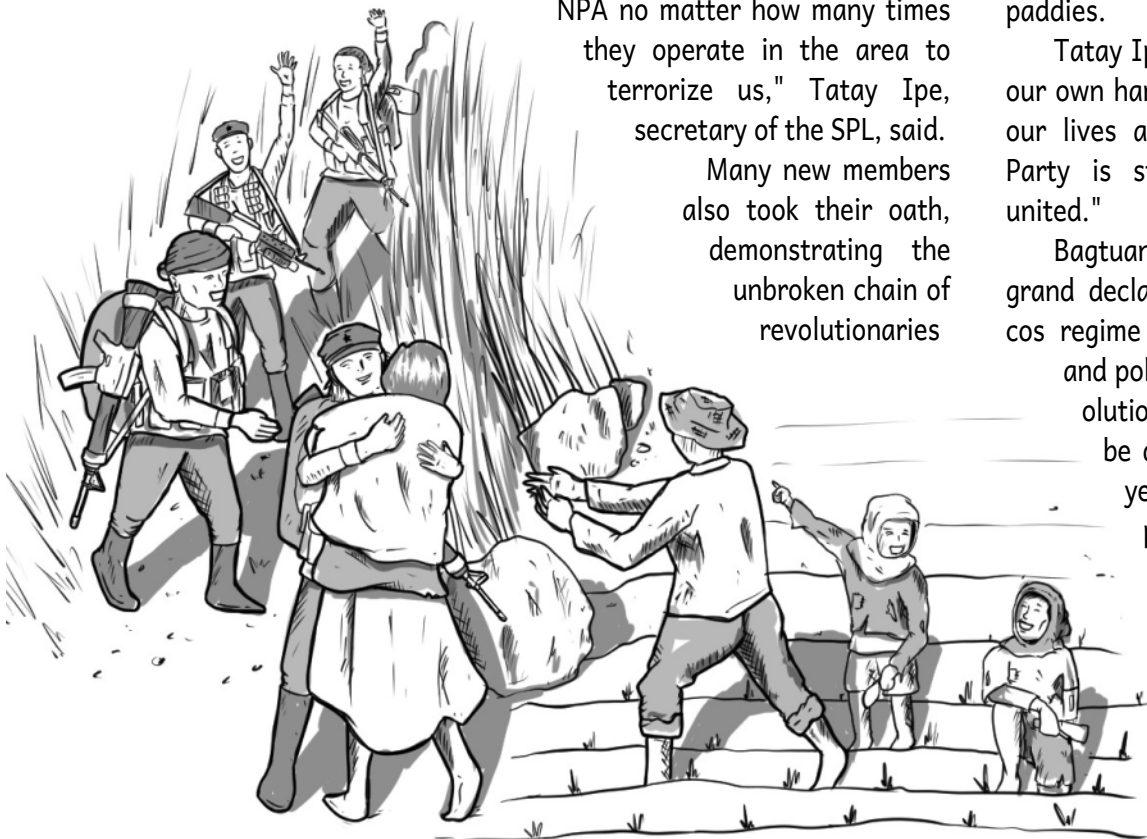
starting with the first Party members who started a new chapter in the village history and revolutionary tradition.

"As beneficiaries of the agrarian revolution, we are fully aware of our duty to continuously persevere in the Party's work like our elders. Unless we do this, the Marcos government will only take back our land," Jonas, a young new Party member, said.

Because the masses understood more deeply the great need to reorganize the Party leading their mass movement, they carried out a series of reconsolidation activities and meetings of the Party's branches in the Bagtuan communities. Through this, they laid out plans for collective defense and mass action in the area to frustrate the enemy's attacks and oppose any bogus and destructive development project that the NTF-ELCAC and the reactionary government intend to implement in Bagtuan. A plan was also developed for *suyuan* (farm labor exchange) and collective farming, which is important during this time of the peak of planting in the swidden farms and paddies.

Tatay Ipe said, "Our future is in our own hands. We can only defend our lives and livelihood when the Party is strong and we are all united."

Bagtuan's experience belies the grand declarations by the US-Marcos regime and its fascist military and police minions that the revolutionary forces will certainly be defeated nationwide this year. This is a living example that no matter how brutal the enemy is, it cannot crush the revolutionary unity of the masses and the New People's Army and the proletarian Party leading the revolution. **AB**



RAA: Military agreement with Japan will further jeopardize Filipinos

The military agreement between the Philippines and Japan, the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), was signed on July 8. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, imperialist Japanese will be allowed to have its troops enter and deploy in the country. This will allow Japanese troops to freely enter and leave the country in the guise of joint exercises and cooperation. It is very similar to the existing Visiting Forces Agreement between the US and the Philippines.

The RAA forms part of the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy aimed mainly at containing the growth of the power and influence of China, the common rival of Japan and the US in Asia. It was signed in the context of Japan's intensified military operations abroad in the framework of the US-led Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), and its growing role in war exercises and preparations.

At the behest of the US in recent years, Japan has strengthened and expanded its so-called self-defense force into a belligerent force, which its own constitution expressly prohibits. The US is compelling Japan to increase its military budget to 2% (from 1%) of its GDP to "share the cost" of "deterring Chinese aggression."

While Japan served as a secondary US imperialist partner, it also makes the calculated risk of strengthening the expansionist aspirations of Japanese monopoly capitalists. In 2023, Japan framed its own Free and Open Indo-Pacific plan to give form to strengthening its own military presence and expansion of influence in Asia as an imperialist country.

Japan intends to dump \$75 billion in surplus capital in the form of investment in various infrastructure projects in South and Southeast Asian countries. More than the US and China, Japan is the largest imperialist investor in the region. Its current investment reaches \$367 billion in projects in South-east Asia alone, mainly in Sin-

gapore, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Deep influence and control in the Philippines

During the Aquino II regime, there were talks between the Philippines and Japan to allow Japanese forces to dock and station in the country. However, it was not until 2023 that negotiations on the formation of the RAA formally began. The US approved it at the Trilateral Summit held between the US, Japan and the Philippines last April, where the joint exercises of the three countries in the South China Sea were finalized. A few days prior to the said meeting, the three countries carried out the first simultaneous joint patrol of warships in the West Philippine Sea.

Through the RAA, Marcos allowed Japan to step up its intervention in the Philippines in return for grants for old military equipment such as radar surveillance systems, as well as promises of investment and loans, only pushing the country further into foreign capital dependency.

The RAA also reopened the unhealed wounds left by Japan's brutal occupation of the Philippines from 1942 to 1945. The heinous war crimes committed by Japanese troops are well documented. The most prominent of these is the system of sexual slavery where thousands of Filipino women, children and gays were abducted from their communities and imprisoned in military camps to be repeatedly raped, tortured, and humiliated. The victims were identified as "comfort women," who until now have been denied justice, both by Japan and the reactionary Philippine state. Despite the push from the United Nations, Japan never fully acknowledged the Filipino comfort women and did not give them a single centavo of compensation. AB



US imperialist's active psywar regarding the West Philippine Sea

The cries of protests of activists rang out during the speech of war-freak US congressman Rep. Darrell Issa at the conference of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in Washington, DC last July 11. They condemned the US military presence in the Philippines, its crimes against the Filipino people and its war provocations against its imperialist rival China.

Issa is a member of the US-Philippine Friendship Caucus and the US House Foreign Affairs Committee. He is pushing the US Congress to grant the Philippines an additional \$500 million in military aid. Issa is openly provoking the Philippines-China conflict over the West Philippine Sea, to advance the interests of the US.

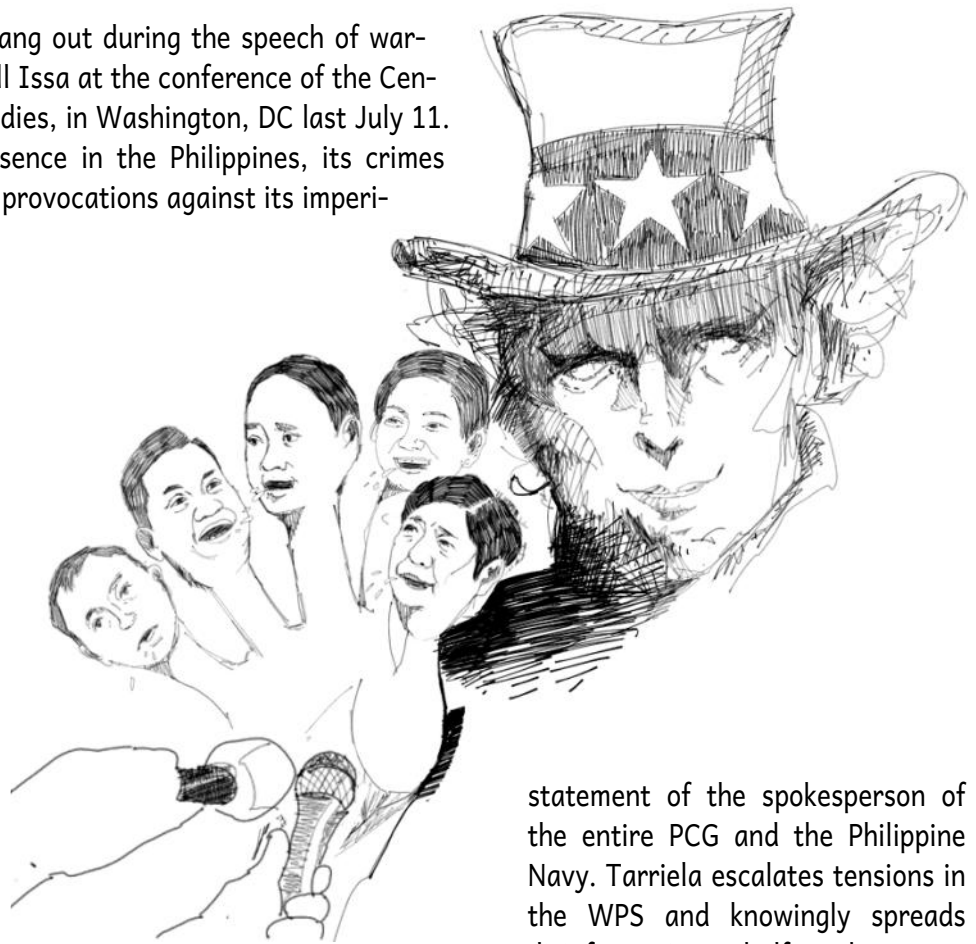
In his speech, Issa praised the US imperialist's successful push for Japan to send military troops to the Philippines to fight a "common enemy" that is China.

Under the guise of hypocritically defending the "free seas and maritime territories of Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines," Issa criticized the alleged "aggressive" activities of Chinese vessels in the South China Sea. "If we do nothing, we will witness how these countries and territories will be engulfed, directly or indirectly," he threatened.

Meanwhile in a letter on July 12, two US senators asked President Joe Biden to provide "a complete list of military, economic and diplomatic options prepared by the Pentagon and the US State Department to support the Philippines in its confrontation with China in the WPS."

Philippine accomplices

Issa and US senators connive with the many US imperialist-paid hacks in the Philippines to wage war against China. At the behest of the US, they clamor non-stop to further heighten tensions in the WPS and incite the Filipinos' "patriotism" against China.



These include former US air force officer Col. Raymond M. Powell, who is afforded with plenty amounts of television time and interviews by Philippine media companies since last year. Powell describes himself as a "security analyst" and "maritime expert."

Powell is a US psywar operative and agent-provocateur who goads Philippine security forces to conduct provocative operations in the West Philippine Sea, and to use the country's Mutual Defense Treaty with the US. He makes non-stop claims that China is not open to talks and that there is no more room for diplomacy and dialogue.

He works with Commodore Jay Tarriela, spokesperson of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) for the WPS, who recently trained in Washington, DC. Although under the command of the PCG, Tarriela always has his own "opinion" on WPS matters. His statements are all over and sometimes contradicts the

statement of the spokesperson of the entire PCG and the Philippine Navy. Tarriela escalates tensions in the WPS and knowingly spreads disinformation or half-truths.

Local pro-US "think tanks" are also actively promoting the US rhetoric and line about WPS. This includes the Stratbase ADR Institute, an institution funded by big business and foreign governments, and actively working with the US and Australian embassies. Like Powell, local media also provides space to the International Development and Security Cooperation group, and some selected pro-US academics.

Furthermore, the Armed Forces of the Philippines itself is also active in psywar to justify its actions to escalate tensions in the West Philippine Sea. It launched on June 28 its "information campaign" Mulat.

8th year of arbitral ruling on the WPS

On the 8th year anniversary of the arbitral ruling on the WPS, fisherfolk and youths launched a

"US imperialist's..." continue on page 7

peaceful fluvial parade in Subic, Zambales on July 12. They emphasized the need for patriotic Filipinos to push for a peaceful and diplomatic solution to assert the country's sovereign right at its exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

A decision by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on 2016 invalidated China's claim of a "9-dash line" covering the entirety of the South China Sea, including much of the WPS. The court also affirmed the sovereign right of the Philippines to its 200 nautical miles (370 km) from the country's baseline coast which is considered its EEZ. This is stipulated under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The decision also stated that Scarborough Shoal (Panatag Shoal) is a common fishing ground shared by traditional or small-scale Filipino, Vietnamese and Chinese fisherfolk. This means that Filipino fisherfolk cannot be prevented from entering and fishing in the area. Although the Scarborough Shoal lie within Philippines's 200 nautical miles, it is not covered by the Philippine EEZ.

They also criticized China's harassment of Philippine vessels sailing in the EEZ. It emphasized China's environmental destruction of some parts of the West Philippine Sea due to its reclamation projects in the area to build artificial islands. AB

Military and police kill brothers, arrest three others

Drug-crazed 2nd IB soldiers shot to death brothers Ronel, 22, and Robert Monsanto, 18, in Sitio Laray, Barangay Aguho, Esperanza, Masbate on July 8. The brothers were herding their livestock when operating soldiers chanced upon and shot them in cold blood.



The soldiers took the remains of the brothers to Barangay San Roque and made it appear that they were Red fighters killed in an armed encounter. They displayed and placed weapons and war paraphernalia on the remains.

Abduction. On the eve of July 9 in Antipolo City, state forces abducted and disappeared peasant leader Melchor Luyao, a member of the Katipunan ng Samahang Magbubukid (Kasama)-Rizal. Human rights groups are currently investigating where Luyao is being kept by state forces and which military or police unit abducted him.

Arrest. The 4th IB and the Philippine National Police (PNP) illegally arrested two farmers' rights advocates in a barangay in Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro on July 13. Joy Laguardia and her companion were surfaced only two days after being arrested.

Joy has long been a social worker helping farmers. Despite the insistence of relatives and human rights defenders, communications between the families and their lawyer, and the arrested individuals continue to be denied.

"Terrorism" charges. Two unionist leaders from the National Capital Region, Rodrigo Esparago and Ed Cabuelo, were charged with "terrorism" or violation of the Anti-Terrorism Act. They are being implicated in an encounter between the people's army and the military in Barangay San Fernando Sur, Laur, Nueva Ecija on October 8, 2023. AB

ILPS successfully holds international anti-imperialist assembly in Malaysia

THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) successfully held its 7th international assembly from June 21 to 24 in Malaysia. The organization issued a communiqué on July 11 reporting that 535 individuals from 44 countries attended the assembly. The 432 delegates were from 192 ILPS member organizations while 103 were guests and observers.

The assembly is the largest in the league's history. The communiqué said this is a reflection of the severe effects of the imperialist economic, political, military and climate crises around the world and the determination of the people to unite and fight for a better world.

Leila Khaled, renowned Palestinian fighter from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, opened the assembly with a speech about the importance of the revolutionary struggle of the Palestinian people against US-Zionist aggression and occupation, and also the importance of international solidarity of struggling peoples. This was followed by speakers on the topics of national liberation, socio-economic development, democracy in the fight against fascism, and just peace in the struggle against wars of aggression.

The delegates conducted discussions and shared experiences that formed the basis for issuing the General Declaration of the seventh assembly. The league also elected new officers. Len Cooper from Australia was re-elected as its leader and Azra Sayeed was elected as its new general secretary.

The assembly paid tribute to Ka Jose Maria Sison, who served as chairman emeritus of the league. This is the first international assembly launched since Sison's passing in 2022.

100

violations of campus press freedom recorded during the two years of the Marcos regime.

Source: College Editors Guild of the Philippines

90

Palestinians massacred in the US-Israeli bombing of al-Mawasi, a designated "safe zone" for displaced people in Gaza on July 13. Zionists dropped five bombs and five US-made missiles.

Special Report:

BLOODY "NEW PHILIPPINES" OF THE US-MARCOS REGIME

Human Rights Report
(December 1, 2023-June 30, 2024)



https://philippinerevolution.nu/20240715_



88%

increase in the productivity of Filipino workers since 1989 when regional wage standardization began.

Real wages fell by 22% during the same period.

1.1 million

average monthly jobs lost in agriculture from January to May 2024 due to the backwardness of the sector and its vulnerability to changes in weather conditions such as El Niño and Typhoon Agaton

5.5%

inflation for 30% of the poorest Filipino families, from 5.3% in May and 3.6% in January.

Food prices rose fastest for this section of society, from 3.3% in January, to 6.1% in May and 6.5% in June.

37%

of the daily living wage of ₱1,210 is the equivalent of the average nationwide wages of ₱442 per day.

Source: Ibon Foundation

₱58+

equivalent to one dollar in July rates, from ₱50=\$1 in January 2022.



74th IB: The fascist plague at Sitio Canonghan

Sitio Canonghan, Barangay Osmeña, Palapag, Northern Samar is being plagued by soldiers of the 74th IB. Since April 2023, when the butcher unit invaded the sitio, repeated human rights violations have been recorded in the area.

On June 2, 74th IB soldiers opened fire on 11 farmers, including seven minors, while they were in their *koprasan* (coconut silo) in the sitio. The soldiers later arrested and brought them to their headquarters.

The 74th IB claimed that an encounter with the New People's Army (NPA)-Northern Samar occurred that day. The military even maliciously declared that they "rescued" the minors who had been "food couriers" of the people's army. The children experienced torture from the soldiers.

They are being treated as "hostages" or "bait" to pressure their parents to "surrender" despite the fact they are merely civilian farmers in the community. They are also forced to train as spies or assets of the fascist soldiers. This is a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Apart from this, the arrest of five individuals was also recorded in February and May including a 4-year-old child. The butcher soldiers also fired artillery near the agricultural part of the sitio in March.

It was also recorded in Barangay Osmeña that soldiers repeatedly summoned farmers' families to "clear" their names. The 74th IB also brazenly imposed a "lockdown" in the barangay.

Farmers are forced to sign "logbooks" on a daily basis to have their activities "monitored". The military even imposed time limits on work hours on farms. They also forbid residents to bring uncooked rice to their farms. Even stores are required to list down the villagers' purchases of food or any material.

Lt. Col. Jose Roy Manuel Dizon heads the 74th IB. The unit was deployed in Eastern Visayas only last February 2023 as part of the Mar-

cos regime's plan to finally "defeat" the NPA in the region. They are among the 22 military battalions under the 8th ID currently in the region.

Causing famine

The 74th IB's terrorism is causing hunger and poverty in the sitio. Before the 74th IB's deployment to the area in 2023, coconut farmers had just begun to recover from the effects of Typhoon Tisoy in 2019 and the cocolisap pest.

In a study, the sitio residents' harvest from their coconut farm fell by 70% due to the impact of the typhoon. From 330,100 coconuts every three months, they now only harvest 99,220. This is equivalent to losing 76,960 kilos of copra with a value of ₱1.5 million.

Poor peasants, who comprise 67% of the families in the sitio, are the most devastated. Their coconut production fell by 83%. The presence of the 74th IB, the lockdown it enforces, limiting their time in the copra shed and farms, all add to their suffering.

Many coconut fruits just go to waste because they are not promptly processed. In one case, coconuts were already unhusked but were left uncooked and rotting due to military operation and repression. The soldiers also restrict the planting of rice, root crops and vegetables in farms and fields.

A family of five in the sitio needs one and a half sacks of rice a month for consumption. Since there are no root and rice crops, they get money to spend from the capital of the *koprasan*.

From experience, a family produces only 100 kilos of copra at a cost of ₱25.00 per kilo (a total of ₱2,500) in a month. This is grossly insufficient even for sustenance. The family needs an alternative source of income which the military impedes.

AB



BRT scheme in Iloilo, bogus modernization for profit-greedy compradors and foreign capitalists

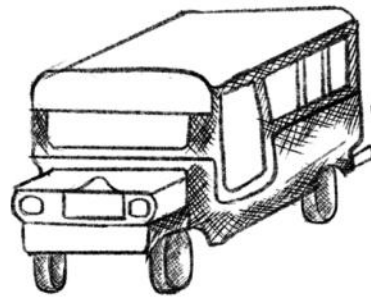
The Iloilo City local government announced last month that it is reviewing the bus-rapid transit (BRT) system proposed by First Balfour Inc. This scheme is part of the bogus Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Plan (PUVMP) which drives jeepneys off the road and divests small drivers and operators of their livelihood. The BRT will occupy the roads cleared by the jeepney phaseout and the routes thinned by the Local Public Transport Route Plan. First Balfour is owned by the Ayala family, one of the largest bourgeois-compradors in the country.

The plan for the BRT scheme in the city was laid out in 2023 by Swedish "experts", using a \$1 million grant from Swedfund, the Swedish government's financial institution. Part of the conditions for the the grant, actually a loan to the local government, is to have Swedish consultants and companies into the local transportation sector.

Swedfund and its accomplice Iloilo officials are pushing the BRT scheme using the pretext that the city needs it for "environmental protection and a low-carbon emission urban transportation system." Under this, e-buses will replace the "old jeeps" purportedly to reduce the city's pollution and greenhouse gases (GHG) which contributes to global warming. This is plain nonsense since the electricity plants themselves are the largest producers of GHG. Panay's 91.9% of electricity needs depend on coal-fired (58.2%) and diesel/bunker-fired (33.7%) plants. GHG emissions by regular buses and jeepneys are small in comparison.

The project will require an estimated ₱2.4 billion for road widening and installation of the necessary facilities such as waiting sheds, traffic lights and other requirements for the BRT system to operate. The local government now wants to place it under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program for the national government to allocate public funds for it.

First Balfour will initially cover



the major route of Diversion Road and key routes in the districts of Jaro and Arevalo. It plans to buy an initial 48 e-buses or battery-operated buses from BYD (Build Your Dreams), a China-based multinational company. BYD e-buses cost \$246,000 to \$605,000 each or ₱14.27 million-₱35.09 million (\$58=₱1). With the current limited service of e-buses in Metro Manila, the base fare is already at \$1 (₱58). Fare is three to four times more expensive than regular buses and 4-5 times more expensive compared to traditional jeepneys.

There are 2,500 traditional jeepneys in the city as of December 2023. Data from the city's transportation agency show that 75% of them registered for consolidation for fear of losing their livelihood by May. The 625 units that did not consolidate are relentlessly threatened being evicted from the streets. Even worse, since June, only 40% of the jeepneys from surrounding towns have been allowed to ply through the city, notwithstanding forced consolidation. This drastically dropped the income of drivers from ₱800/per day to ₱300 and of operators from

₱3,500 to ₱1,500 per day.

Dumping ground of foreign capital

Eleven other BRT systems are under the PPP program of the Marcos regime besides the Iloilo BRT. These are all being pushed and promoted by foreign financial institutions.

BRT systems in Bataan, Central Luzon, Manila Bay, EDSA (Metro Manila High-Quality Bus Corridor and EDSA Busway Improved Project), Skyway, Panglao-Tagbilaran in Bohol, General Santos City and Cagayan de Oro are in the stage of preparation, planning and development. The Davao BRT project has been approved and the construction of the Cebu BRT has begun.

The BRTs in EDSA and Davao are projects of the Asian Development Bank of Japan. It borrowed one billion dollars or ₱58 billion for the Davao BRT.

Meanwhile, the Cebu BRT is a project of the World Bank under its Clean Technology Finance and Agence Française de Développement of the French government. Ferdinand Marcos Jr himself attended the "project ground breaking" on February 27, 2023. AB